



**GREATER MIDLAND CONTACT:**

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## **Greater Midland Named One of the Nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People**

**September 11, 2012** — For the fifth year in a row, the Greater Midland area has achieved national recognition as one of the America's Promise Alliance *100 Best Communities for Young People*. The national award, sponsored by ING U.S. and the ING Foundation, was given to Greater Midland for its outstanding and innovative work in addressing the high school dropout crisis and for its programs and services that make it an outstanding place for youth to live, learn, and grow.

Greater Midland is being honored as a *100 Best* winner for its ongoing commitment to youth health and safety. The community's Youth Master Plan addresses ways for organizations and businesses to proactively serve youth. The Health and Human Services Council – a collaboration of nonprofit organizations, foundations, and health and human service organizations – works to ensure the welfare of Greater Midland residents by addressing community poverty, housing, family, and health needs.

To encourage healthy self-esteem among young girls, Shelterhouse, a domestic and sexual violence agency, sponsors Girls on the Run. The program provides girls in grades three through five with health education, life skills development, and mentoring as they train for a 5K run.

Community service and volunteerism are also encouraged among teens who learn to give back to the community through organizations such as the Midland County Youth Action Council.

“Being named one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best* is significant and meaningful to the entire community,” said Midland Mayor Maureen Donker. “So many dedicated people and programs contributed to this win, and it further reinforces our belief that a strong youth focus impacts our community for the better.”

“As young people across the country go back to school, it is especially timely to recognize communities like Greater Midland that have come together to help young Americans reach their full potential,” said John Gomperts, America's Promise Alliance president and CEO. “The *100 Best* winners are doing outstanding work creating conditions for all young people to have the best chance for success. We hope the example set by these communities provides inspiration for others to take action.”

At noon EST on September 12, Gomperts will join America's Promise Alliance Chair Alma Powell and ING Foundation President Rhonda Mims at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., to officially announce the 100 winning communities during a live webcast at <http://www.americaspromise.org/100Bestwebcast>.

In addition to the *100 Best* distinction, Greater Midland will receive a \$2,500 grant, signage identifying Greater Midland as a *100 Best* community, and access to community development resources through America's Promise Alliance.

The *100 Best* competition is part of the Grad Nation campaign, a large and growing movement of dedicated individuals, organizations and communities working together to end the dropout crisis. The goal of Grad Nation is to raise the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020, with no school graduating fewer than 80 percent of its students on time.

This year, more than 320 communities from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico were nominated for the *100 Best* distinction. A list of all 2012 winners can be found at [www.americaspromise.org/100best](http://www.americaspromise.org/100best).

To learn more about the successful programs and initiatives that make Greater Midland a *100 Best* community, visit [www.midland-mi.org/100Best.htm](http://www.midland-mi.org/100Best.htm).

**About America's Promise Alliance:** America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. We bring together more than 400 national organizations representing nonprofit groups, businesses, communities, educators, and policymakers. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, America's Promise believes the success of young people is grounded in the Five Promises—Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. For more information, visit [AmericasPromise.org](http://AmericasPromise.org).

**About ING U.S.:** ING U.S. constitutes the U.S.-based retirement, investment management, and insurance operations of Dutch-based ING Groep N.V. In the U.S., the ING family of companies offers a comprehensive array of financial services to retail and institutional clients. ING U.S. holds top-tier rankings in key U.S. markets and serves approximately 13 million customers across the nation. For more information, visit <http://ing.us>.

**About the ING Foundation:** The Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life in communities where ING operates and its employees and customers live. Through charitable giving and employee volunteerism, the Foundation focuses on programs in the areas of financial education, children's education, and physical education. For more information, visit <http://www.ing-usafoundation.com>.